

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 3, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to urge inclusion of child care providers in your Administration's plans to increase access to COVID-19 testing and N95 masks across the country. We appreciate the actions by your Administration to increase access to COVID-19 testing in K-12 schools by 10 million per month as well as your efforts to distribute tests and masks to individual Americans. However, we remain concerned about the significant challenges child care providers are facing as the Omicron variant spreads and the impact this is having on families.

It is clear that child care is essential infrastructure that is fundamental to families, the economy, and our recovery from this pandemic. However, reports suggest that child care disruptions are once again on the rise as the Omicron variant spreads and providers are forced to limit their capacity or close due to illness or staffing issues.¹ This is leaving millions of parents and caregivers in limbo as they face uncertainty on whether they will have access to child care on any given day. These challenges are compounded by the fact that children under five are not yet eligible for vaccines, and data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that COVID-19 hospitalization rates among children in this age group have soared in recent weeks.²

To help keep child care providers operating and young children safe, we must ensure that providers have access to COVID-19 tests and the recommended N95 and KN95 masks. Some states have launched their own initiatives to distribute free COVID-19 tests and other supplies to child care providers, and these models have proven effective for providers in detecting positive cases early and avoiding internal spread.³ However, it is still hard to access COVID-19 tests in

¹ Wong, Alia, *Omicron Closing Day Care Centers in Droves as Parents Are 'Just Trying to Stay Afloat'*, USA TODAY (Jan. 16, 2022), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2022/01/16/daycare-centers-omicron-covid-case-surge-quarantine/6531856001/>.

² Caldwell, Travis & Kallingal, Mallika, *Child Hospitalization Rates Hit Record Highs as Omicron Variant Becomes Prevalent*, CNN (Jan. 12, 2022), <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/07/health/us-coronavirus-friday/index.html>.

³ Wong, Alia, *'An Incredibly Important Tool': Omicron Could Mean More COVID-19 Testing for Day Care Centers*, USA TODAY (Dec. 27, 2021), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2021/12/27/omicron-wave-could-mean-more-covid-19-testing-child-care-centers/9002686002/>; Gavin, Christopher, *Mass. Unveils 'First-*

many places, and child providers, many of whom are already operating on the margins, have reported spending anywhere from \$1,000 to \$10,000 on rapid and at-home tests for themselves and the families in their care.⁴

Now is the time for a comprehensive strategy to ensure that all child care providers have the resources and guidance they need to safely remain open and provide care. Our economic recovery depends on a reliable and functioning child care system that supports providers, helps children thrive, and enables parents, and especially moms, to return to work.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and we look forward to working with you to support children and families.

Sincerely,



Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress

in-the-Nation' COVID Testing Initiative for Child Care Programs, Boston.com (Jan. 19, 2022), <https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2022/01/19/massachusetts-first-in-nation-covid-testing-child-care-programs/>.

⁴ Dale, Mariana, *California Will Distribute COVID-19 Tests to Child Care Providers by the End of January, But Many Aren't Waiting Around*, LAist (Jan. 13, 2022), <https://laist.com/news/health/california-at-home-coronavirus-covid-19-testing-child-care-early-childhood-education>; Germano, Beth, *Child Care And Preschools In Massachusetts To Get Rapid COVID Tests For Kids, Staff*, CBS Boston (Jan. 19, 2022), <https://boston.cbslocal.com/2022/01/19/covid-19-tests-massachusetts-governor-charlie-baker-announcement-child-day-care-facilities/>.

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